

# Right-wing presidential candidate RFK Jr. picks wealthy Silicon Valley lawyer Nicole Shanahan as running mate

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On Tuesday, far-right presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. announced that his running mate will be Nicole Shanahan, an ultra-wealthy Silicon Valley patent lawyer who had previously donated tens of thousands of dollars to Democratic Party presidential candidates.

From 2018 through December 2022, Shanahan was married to Google co-founder Sergey Brin, the 10th wealthiest person in the world. The *Wall Street Journal* reported in July 2022 that Shanahan and Elon Musk, the fascist multi-billionaire, had a brief affair before the divorce with Brin was finalized. The *Journal* previously reported that Shanahan was seeking at least \$1 billion from Brin in the divorce proceedings but that the final total was confidential.

Kennedy announced Shanahan at a political rally in her hometown of Oakland, California, which was attended by less than 1,000 people. According to Shanahan, she grew up in Oakland “on food stamps” before attending college, graduating from the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington, and later receiving a law degree from Santa Clara University School of Law. Shanahan’s mother was a Chinese immigrant; her father was a German-Irish American.

Over the last two weeks, media reports all but confirmed that Shanahan would be the pick. She has been involved in Kennedy’s campaign since last April, when he originally announced he was running as a Democrat.

After Kennedy left the party last October and rebranded himself as an “independent,” Shanahan, in an interview with the *New York Times*, said she was “incredibly disappointed.” She added that she “kind of withdrew and paused all my political giving.”

However, she told the *Times* that by January of this year she had recommitted to Kennedy’s campaign, seeding his super PAC with \$4.5 million, \$4 million of which went towards RFK Jr.’s \$7 million, 30-second Super Bowl advertisement. The TV spot mirrored his famous uncle’s 1960 promotion.

Shanahan was previously a Democrat but confirmed in her

speech Tuesday that she had left the party. In her speech, she tried to appeal to younger voters and Kennedy’s base of anti-science zealots. Echoing his campaign language, she warned of the danger of “electromagnetic pollution” and asserted that the scientific community did not know the “effects of shot after shot.”

In an interview with the *New York Times* last month, she said, “I do wonder about vaccine injuries,” adding that while she would not describe herself as an “anti-vaxxer,” she thought “there needs to be space to have these conversations.”

Shanahan has never run for political office herself, but her wealth has allowed her to donate thousands of dollars to the various Democratic campaigns over the last decade, including to current Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, presidential candidate Marianne Williamson and President Joe Biden.

Reflecting the rightward shift of the Democratic Party and the ruling class as a whole, Shanahan confirmed to *Puck* in 2022 that she had also donated to the recall campaign of San Francisco District Attorney Chesa Boudin.

Boudin was elected with the support of “progressives” based on his campaign promises to reduce jail sentences and tackle police brutality. For this he was targeted in a well-funded, right-wing law-and-order campaign financed by millionaires like Shanahan and other business interests.

Speaking to *Puck* of her decision to back the recall of Boudin, Shanahan said that before Boudin took office, “I thought San Francisco was in a good place. ... And then Chesa won on a very pro-reform stance, which San Francisco wanted. ... Chesa came into a situation that needed to be maintained, in my opinion, not necessarily reformed...”

Prior to Kennedy taking the stage and announcing Shanahan as his pick, several other Kennedy surrogates gave speeches in support of the candidate, touting his record of opposition to public health and science.

Among those singing the praises of Kennedy was his communications director, Del Bigtree, who is executive director of the Informed Consent Action Network (ICAN), which, next to Kennedy's Children's Health Defense, is the largest purveyor of anti-vaccine disinformation in the world.

Bigtree was well known in the anti-vaccine community prior to the onset of COVID-19. In 2016, he produced the anti-vaccination propaganda film *Vaxxed: From Cover-up to Catastrophe*, which was directed by disgraced ex-doctor Andrew Wakefield. Wakefield authored a bogus 1998 study in *The Lancet*, later retracted, which claimed that the MMR vaccine caused autism.

Despite the fact the study was retracted and neither Wakefield nor anyone else has been able to replicate its results, Kennedy and others continue to propagate the lie that vaccines cause autism.

Bigtree latched on to ex-President Donald Trump's "Stop the Steal" movement and repeated its false claims that election machines rigged the vote for Biden. On January 6, 2021, Bigtree joined top Trump political crony Roger Stone in Washington D.C. for the "MAGA Freedom Rally D.C."

Following Bigtree, Jay Battacharya, one of the authors of the eugenicist "Great Barrington Declaration," took the stage at the Oakland event. The "Great Barrington Declaration" was sponsored by the libertarian think tank American Institute for Economic Research. It postulated that "herd immunity" from COVID-19 could be reached through "focused protection."

According to this proposal, the elderly and those with comorbidities would be sheltered, while the young and healthy would be encouraged to get infected. Over the last four years, the basic outlines of this homicidal policy have been adopted by all capitalist governments, including in America, where over 1,000 people have been dying from COVID-19 every single week since last August.

The announcement of Shanahan as Kennedy's running mate comes after weeks of speculation about who the son of the assassinated US Attorney General and New York Senator Robert F. Kennedy and nephew to assassinated President John F. Kennedy would choose. Possible choices RFK Jr. was entertaining, according to press reports, included former Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura and New York Jets quarterback Aaron Rodgers.

Kennedy was obligated to announce a vice presidential candidate in order to begin to apply for ballot status. As of this writing, Kennedy has only qualified to appear on the ballot in

Utah.

No doubt part of the calculus in choosing Shanahan as his running mate is her immense wealth. Speaking in Oakland, Shanahan emphasized that her number one priority for the next seven months would be getting Kennedy's name on the ballot.

As detailed by the WSWS in several recent articles, the Democratic Party is conducting a multimillion-dollar campaign to prevent any candidates not named Joe Biden from appearing on the ballot. Among the main targets of the Democrats is the campaign of Socialist Equality Party candidate for president Joseph Kishore and his running mate, Jerry White.

Democrats have also targeted the campaigns of Green Party candidate Jill Stein and independent candidate Cornel West. In a statement sent to the WSWS, Stein's campaign manager Jason Call denounced both the Democrats and Republicans for blocking ballot access, writing that both parties were "fully beholden to the corporate interests which fund the political system."

Edwin DeJesus, co-manager and director of ballot access for the Cornel West campaign, likewise denounced the "self-proclaimed guardians of democracy, working to eliminate third-party participation" in a statement to the WSWS.

Despite the fact that Kennedy Jr. appears to be pulling more support from ex-President Trump, Democrats have also targeted Kennedy's campaign. CBS News reported over the weekend that the 15,000 signatures the Kennedy campaign collected to appear on the ballot in Nevada were not valid because he did not indicate that Shanahan would be his vice presidential pick when he submitted the signatures.

On Monday, Kennedy's campaign threatened to sue Nevada to keep his name on the ballot. Kennedy's ballot access attorney Paul Rossi provided emails to CBS confirming that the Kennedy campaign reached out to the Nevada Secretary of State's office in November to confirm that he did not need to list a vice presidential candidate on the application.

"Does the vice presidential candidate have to be listed on the petition forms?" a Kennedy ballot access manager asked in the email reviewed by CBS. "No," was the reply.



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